

REMARKS

I. Introduction.

Claims 1-15 are pending and stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a). Claim 2 has been cancelled without prejudice. Claim 16 has been added.

II. The 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) Rejection.

Claims 1-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,562,142, Barger, et al. in view of U.S. Patent 5,320,752 issued to Clack, et al. or U.S. Patent 6,571,960 issued to Williamson, et al.

The Office Action states that the Barger, et al. reference is a primary reference that discloses a sprayer assembly with the exception of the recited connector structure. The Office Action further states that Clack, et al. and Williamson, et al. references each disclose connectors for water purification cartridges, which include a flexible material, an insertion aid, and a hollow post. The Office Action states that it would have been obvious to provide the sprayer assembly of Barger, et al. with the quick connect couplers of either Clack, et al. or Williamson, et al. in order to permit easy replacement of the purifier element in this primary reference.

The Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be reconsidered and withdrawn. The Office Action does not identify what elements of the Clack, et al. reference are considered to comprise the flexible material, insertion aid, and the hollow post, and is unclear in this respect. Applicants will nevertheless attempt to respond to this rejection. The Clack, et al. reference discloses a filter assembly having inlet and outlet ports having quick connect couplings for connection to a supply hose. The ports have a stepped nipple formed thereon. The hose is sealed to the nipple by O-rings (104). The Clack, et al. reference, thus, still requires the additional O-rings to form a seal against leakage.

The Clack, et al. reference does not disclose the structure claimed in Claims 1 and 15, and the claims that are dependent therefrom. The Clack, et al. reference does not disclose a structure having, among other things, an outer surface with at least one opening therein, which opening is at least partially surrounded by an integral portion of said structure that has flexibility, wherein a portion of said structure extends toward the center of the opening, and extends inwardly at an angle in a direction opposite to said outer surface, and said portion is thinner and more flexible than the portions of the structure that are disposed outwardly thereof, and said portion of said structure forms a seal

between said cartridge and said sprayer. The Barger, et al. reference also does not teach or disclose such a structure.

The Office Action also does not identify what elements of the Williamson, et al. reference are considered to comprise the flexible material, insertion aid, and the hollow post. If the Office Action is referring to the alignment nubs 37a, 37b, and 39 as being the hollow post, and the seals 79a and 79b as comprising the flexible material, the structure described in the pending claims differs from the structure disclosed in the Williamson, et al. reference. The Williamson, et al. reference also still requires the additional O-rings to form a seal against leakage.

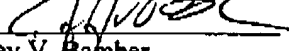
The Section 103(a) rejection based upon this combination of references should, therefore, be withdrawn.

III. Summary.

All of the rejections have been addressed. In view of the foregoing, a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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